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ABSTRACT

This document describes the variable student scheduling program at Arapahoe High School in Littleton, a suburb of Denver, Colorado. Under this plan students have Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes and Tuesday-Thursday classes of approximately one hour. Four- and five-day-a-week classes are also scheduled. The program is now in its third year of operation. The program was instituted to help broaden the scope of the curriculum, to give students and teachers more time for preparation and interaction, to give students greater opportunity for decisionmaking, and to allow teachers to experiment with new teaching techniques. Under the program the number of course offerings increased from approximately 100 to approximately 250, and resource centers for students and teachers have been created. The document lists the advantages and disadvantages of the program and describes how the program was implemented. (Author/DN)

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ARAPAHOE HIGH SCHOOL
VARIABLE STUDENT SCHEDULING

School Profile

Arapahoe High School is a comprehensive three-year school located in Littleton, a suburb of Denver, Colorado. The community is primarily residential in nature with the majority of the people being business, professional, and executive personnel. The enrollment of the school is 2,200 students and seventy-five to eighty per cent of the students are college bound. The school is now in its seventh year of operation.

Variable Student Scheduling Program

The school is operating under a Variable Student Scheduling system which was established in the school year 1968-69. Two years of study, travel, and planning on the part of the administration and faculty at Arapahoe High School preceeded implementation of the program. Simply stated, Variable Student Scheduling means that students have Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes and Tuesday-Thursday classes of approximately one hour. Four and five day a week classes are also scheduled. The program is now in its third year of operation.

Why?

The faculty and administration were looking for an improved program because of the following:

1. The curriculum was somewhat limited in scope and we were interested in broadening our course offerings in order to meet better the interests of the student body.

2. We wanted the students and teachers to have more time during the day to meet on a one-to-one basis.

3. We believed that teachers needed more time for classroom preparation.

4. We believed that students should be exposed to the disciplines of the fine and practical arts.

5. We believed that students should have the opportunity to make some of their own decisions regarding their high school education.

6. We seriously questioned the value of the traditional five by five system for all classes.

7. We wanted to provide additional opportunities for students to become more self-disciplined and responsible in their emotional makeup.

8. We wanted to develop subject area resource centers and open laboratories in lieu of mass study halls.

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3. We believed that our program should have built-in provisions which would encourage teachers to try new approaches to teaching in an effort to improve the learning atmosphere in the classroom.

What actually happened?

Faculty members spent many hours studying course content and exploring new ways of scheduling. Subject area writing teams worked on new course outlines and course descriptions. We explained to parents and students the philosophy behind program innovations. The program was then developed and placed into operation.

The following statements indicate what actually happened as a part of the planning and as a result of program implementation:

1. The number of course offerings increased from approximately 100 to approximately 250.

2. The new schedule provided for increased unscheduled time for students.

3. The new schedule provided for additional unscheduled and preparation time for teachers.

4. We created subject matter resource centers for students and teachers to utilize during unscheduled time.

5. We changed the graduation requirements.

6. We hired consultants to advise us as we implemented the program.

7. The teaching staff was challenged with the responsibility of finding better ways to teach.

8. The faculty and administration visited other schools that were utilizing new and improved approaches to learning.

9. We received a grant for the planning and implementation from the Federal Government under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act - Title III.

How?

1. We added areas of required course work for students.

2. Subject area writing teams made substantial modifications in course content.

3. Curricular offerings were adjusted in schedule to variations of five, four, three, and two periods of fifty-five minutes per week in the schedule.

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4. We purchased additional audio-visual materials, books, and paperbacks to stock resource centers.

5. We added para-professionals to assist in clerical duties, corridor supervision, and resource center supervisory responsibilities.

6. We enrolled students in eight and nine different courses per semester.

7. We have made efforts to evaluate the program regularly through departmental work at the school level and through the use of two consultants. In addition, the Colorado State Department of Education has evaluated the program each year since the program was adopted.

8. We placed teachers into specialized office areas.

9. In the Science, Foreign Language, and Business Education Departments, the open lab approach was implemented.

10. We provided the schedule and facility for large group instruction.

11. We provided resource centers in the Mathematics, English, Foreign Language, Science, Fine Arts subject matter areas.

12. We implemented the open campus philosophy.

What are the advantages?

1. The teachers are happy with the program because of the added preparation time that is available and because of better opportunities to talk with students individually.

2. The curriculum seems to be more meaningful to students, and students are receiving a broader educational experience.

3. The alternate day provisions in the schedule plus the opportunities to enroll in more courses seem noticeably to have decreased student boredom.

4. Three-hour and two-hour course offerings have encouraged the faculty to make better utilization of class time and to scrutinize more carefully the content of particular courses.

5. Scholastic achievement on the basis of test scores indicates that our students are achieving better or as well as they were on the regular program.

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6. Good numbers of students are taking advantage of the increased opportunities of utilizing resource centers and the intensive study area in the library.

7. Unscheduled time and the flexibility of the schedule make it easier to operate activities such as forums, group discussions, departmental meetings, and parent conferences.

8. Students who have continued their education following graduation have told us that our program has helped them considerably in adjusting to the freedom and self-responsibility that college programs require.

9. The program appears to have contributed positively to the maintenance of a healthy working environment in the building.

10. The elimination of large study halls has decreased the discipline and supervisory problems that are typically associated with the study hall situation.

Problems

1. It is somewhat difficult to manage and coordinate the program because of the large number of variables involved.

2. Open campus creates problems for the student who has not developed adequate personal attitudes toward himself psychologically and educationally. Parents question the open campus philosophy.

3. Counselor workload increases significantly in the area of academic counseling and, as a result, counselor time for personal counseling is lacking.

4. Inequitable teaching assignments are the rule rather than the exception.

5. Cost of the program increases in the areas of textbooks, teaching supplies, and audio-visual materials.

6. Clerical workload increases significantly.

7. The breadth of the program makes it difficult to manage from the standpoint of determing what the program should or should not include.

8. The number of teaching preparations increases with the program. Student-teacher load is increased in some areas.

9. Students do not always use their unscheduled time for study.

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10. The workload of the Attendance Office is greater because most students need to be recorded in eight or nine different classes. We are having some difficulty in keeping parents informed of absences.

11. Building maintenance problems increase because of the traffic in the building.

12. Campus appearance becomes a problem because of the open campus situation.

13. Motivating students, who need extra help, to see teachers for private student-teacher conferences is a problem. Teachers are doing a commendable job, however, the need for improvement is certainly not questionable.

14. Keeping the program updated requires a large amount of curriculum writing. This task is hard work. Additional work time is involved and, as a result, extra pay is often requested.

15. The Master Schedule building task becomes more complex because of additional number of offerings. Singleton and doubleton classes are prominent.

16. Parents have a tendency to attribute attendance and academic problems to the program.